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**TO: Economic Support Supervisors
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W-2 Agencies**

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BHCE/BWP OPERATIONS MEMO

No.: 03-77

Date: 12/29/2003

Non W-2 ☐ W-2 ☒ CC ☐

PRIORITY: HIGH

**SUBJECT: EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR WISCONSIN
WORKS (W-2) APPLICANTS**

CROSS REFERENCE: 2003 Wisconsin Act 33, s.49.147(1m), Stats.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2004

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform Wisconsin Works (W-2) agencies of a change in policy that requires an educational needs assessment to be conducted for each new applicant of a W-2 employment position (W-2 Transition, Community Service Job and Trial Job) and case management services for unsubsidized employment (CMS and CMU). This policy change is based on a provision in the state biennial budget legislation, 2003 Wisconsin Act 33.

CURRENT POLICY

Currently, W-2 policy requires that education and training needs be assessed as part of the informal assessment that is completed when placing a participant into an employment position. The Financial Employment Planner (FEP) must work with the participant to identify resources that will address any unmet needs, paying close attention to the services available through the W-2 agency's Children's Services Network.

INDIVIDUALS PLACED IN UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT

A separate W-2 policy, provided for through state statutes, requires a FEP to conduct an educational needs assessment for any individual for whom they determine that the appropriate placement is unsubsidized employment or a Trial Job. If the individual is in need of basic education, including a course of study meeting the standards established for the granting of a declaration of high school graduation, and the individual wishes to pursue basic education, the activity must be included in the individual's Employability Plan (EP). W-2 agencies must pay for the basic education services identified in the EP.

New Policy

Effective January 1, 2004, the current policies described above will be replaced by the following policies:

The FEP is required to conduct an educational needs assessment with all new applicants at the point in the application process where the individual has been determined to be financially and non-financially eligible for W-2. The educational needs assessment must always be completed before making a W-2 placement decision. The assessment must:

1. *Identify the applicant's current education and training levels.* Agencies are encouraged to use a standardized educational assessment tool to determine education and training levels. Assessment tools such as Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) and Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) are already widely use by W-2 agencies for this purpose.
2. *Determine the applicant's education and training needs.* In making this determination, the FEP must consider the following:
 - A. The information gathered on the applicant's current education and training levels. The FEP must document this information on the appropriate CARES screens (WPED and WPAW) and in case comments;
 - B. The level of education and training necessary to obtain full-time employment in the local labor market. The Department of Workforce Development maintains a website that covers Wisconsin labor market information at <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/>. From this website you can link to many useful resources, such as:
 - *LMI – for Workforce Development Areas* at http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/wda_map.htm. This site covers the occupations in demand for each region and county in the state.
 - The *Occupational Information Network (O*NET)*, at <http://online.onetcenter.org/>. This site provides comprehensive information on job requirements and worker competencies for employment sectors and occupations;
 - and-
 - C. The participant's personal employment goals.

If the FEP determines that the individual is eligible for W-2 and s/he needs or would benefit from education or training activities, including a course of study meeting the standards established for the granting of a declaration of high school graduation, the education and training activities must be included in the individual's EP.

Case Example 1:

Holly is found financially and nonfinancially eligible for W-2. She has not completed high school and the educational needs assessment finds her to be at a 10th grade reading and math comprehension level. The assessment also shows that she is artistic and has good mechanical skills. Holly tells the FEP she has had several brief job spells as a short-order cook and her personal employment goal is to become a chef. However, all of her past employment has resulted in job terminations due to disputes with her supervisors.

The FEP determines that Holly would be appropriate for a CSJ. For the first week, Holly is assigned to 40 hours of Job Readiness/Motivation training. After completing the first week, she is assigned to 30 hours per week at a work experience site that combines food preparation experience with culinary skills training and 8 hours per week of tutoring to prepare her for her General Equivalency Diploma.

Case Example 2:

Susan meets both financial and non-financial eligibility for W-2. Through the educational needs assessment her FEP learns that she has a high school diploma and a 1-year certificate from the technical college as a Medical Assistant, but no prior employment history. Susan claims that she has been applying for jobs but has been unable to find employment in her field. After reviewing local labor market information and determining that there are job opportunities in Susan's field, the FEP assigns Susan to a CMS placement and refers her to the agency's job developer to work on her resume and interviewing skills and locate job opportunities in her field.

The educational needs assessment will remain a part of the informal assessment process described in the W-2 Manual. Accordingly, the participant must be reassessed for education and training needs anytime there is a change in W-2 placement.

FEPs must continue to follow all other education and training policies found in the W-2 Manual.

W-2 Policies such as aggregated education and training (Section 8.2.1) and the technical college provision (Section 8.3.0) can be utilized to help participants attain vocational skills beyond their high school or high school equivalency diploma.

Individuals Placed in Unsubsidized Employment

If the individual is placed in unsubsidized employment (CMS, CMF or CMU) or a Trial Job and that individual needs and wishes to pursue basic education, including a course of study meeting the standards established for the granting of a declaration of high school graduation, the W-2 agency must include the activity in the participants EP. The W-2 agency must pay for the basic education services identified in the EP. *Note: there were no changes to this policy.*

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING FOR W-2 AGENCIES

The Division of Workforce Solutions can provide technical assistance and training to W-2 agency staff on the topics of educational needs assessment, career counseling, career development assessment and how to select and use standardized assessment tools. Training can be conducted locally at a W-2 agency or at the Department of Workforce Development in Madison, depending on the request. To inquire about technical assistance or training please contact Roger H. Gantzrow, Director of Counseling and Testing at 608-266-8390 or e-mail him at roger.gantzrow@dwd.state.wi.us.

LINKS

Workforce Development Areas: http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/wda_map.htm
Wisconsin labor market information: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/>
Occupational Information Network (O*NET): <http://online.onetcenter.org/>

CONTACTS

BHCE CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center

Email: carpolcc@dhfs.state.wi.us
Telephone: (608) 261-6317 (Option #1)
Fax: (608) 267-2269

Note: Email contacts are preferred. Thank you.